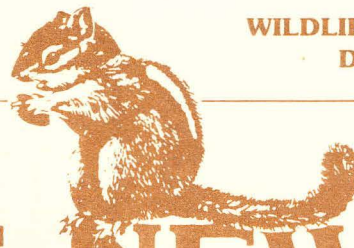


# WEST VIRGINIA NONGAME NEWS



VOLUME 4, NUMBER 2

SPRING 1986

## Nongame Project Review

### •Booklets Available

The 1987 Nongame Cooperative Project application booklets are now available. This program awards grants of up to \$500 on a competitive basis for projects that will benefit nongame wildlife in WV. If you haven't already received one in the mail, write to: Nongame Cooperative Projects, P. O. Box 67, Elkins, WV 26241 or call (304) 636-1767. The deadline for 1987 project submissions is November 30, 1986.



### •Wildlife Weekend

The Third Annual Nongame Wildlife Weekend will again be held at Blackwater Falls State Park June 6-8. The park displays some of the most spectacular scenery in WV, as well as providing an array of interesting and unique environments supporting an abundance of wildlife. Activities will begin with registration at 1:00 Friday

afternoon. The weekend will feature talks on WV wildflowers, ecology of a limestone cave, birds of WV, freshwater mussels, and much more. Our guest speaker will be Dr. Larry Schwab of Morgantown, who will give a slide presentation on African birds.

As a departure from the schedules of years past, this year's weekend will emphasize an even greater involvement of participants. Workshops will be held on such subjects as gathering and preparing wild foods, nature trail design and construction, wildlife wood carving, and identification and collection techniques for plants, aquatic creatures, butterflies, insects, and snakes. Exciting and informative field trips will also be offered. If you haven't already received a reservation form, write to Maxine Scarbro, Dept. of Natural Resources, 1800 Washington St., East, Room 711, Charleston, WV 25305. For the last two years accommodations at the park have been quickly filled, so send your reservation form in early to assure a space at this enlightening weekend!

### •WV Breeding Bird Atlas

The WV Breeding Bird Atlas Project is entering its third field season in 1986. This program is sponsored by the Brooks Bird Club of Wheeling, WV, with the financial support of the Nongame Wildlife Fund. The objective of the study is to accurately map the breeding ranges of the state's birds

using volunteer bird watchers. Over 250 volunteers donned hiking boots and binoculars to participate in the 1985 census.

The Atlas project will accomplish a variety of goals, all of which will contribute to better management of our state's natural resources. These goals include: producing distribution maps for every species known to nest in WV, providing new nesting locations for rare and endangered birds, identifying habitats supporting these rare species, establishing baseline data against which any future changes in bird populations can be compared, providing information to help environmental planners make wise decisions on resource use in WV and finally, to involve WV birders in an exciting and important project while introducing other individuals to a new and enjoyable pastime.

The concept of atlasing is a method by which the distribution of plants and animals in a given area is determined by recording the occurrence of individual species within a series of uniform, geographic subunits or blocks. This method dates back to the 1860's when European botanists began to map the distribution of various plants. The British were the first to use the technique for breeding birds. In 1968 they began a 5-year project which resulted in a completed atlas of Britain and Ireland. The first breeding bird atlas project in North America was carried out in Montgomery County, Maryland,

*Continued on page two*



(Continued from page one)

under the direction of Chandler Robbins. Massachusetts and Vermont were the first states to initiate statewide atlases and have completed their 5-year projects. As of 1983, 11 states and several Canadian Provinces had atlas projects underway.

The WV Atlas project is co-directed by Dr. Albert R. Buckelew, Jr. of Bethany College and Dr. George A. Hall of West Virginia University. Although atlasing can be a year-round activity, now is the time to contact your district coordinator listed below for information on how you may participate in this important project.



## The National Wild Foods Association

The National Wild Foods Association (NWFA) consists of individuals who share an interest in gathering and preparing wild foods for consumption or medicinal purposes. This organization is an outgrowth of the annual Nature Wonder Weekend that has been held at North Bend State Park each September since 1969. The late Euell Gibbons, author of several books including *Stalking the Wild Asparagus* and *Stalking the Good Life*, had been guest of honor at the weekend for many years. Through the years, the appreciation and popularity of wild foods grew, so that by the time of his death, a national organization had formed to carry on his work. The leaders of the Nature Wonder Weekend were named as officers. Currently, they are: Edeline Wood, President; Robert Rogers, Vice President; Maxine Scarbro, Treasurer; and Osbra Eye and Fred Fromhart, secretaries. North Bend State Park has remained the headquarters for the NWFA, and a nature trail has been named to honor Euell Gibbons.

For an individual to become a member of this organization, the only requirement is that he or she wishes to be part of an organization which recognizes wild food gathering and usage as a national pastime and declares to be an appreciative member. The annual membership dues are only \$2.00 per person. Benefits include an opportunity to participate in an annual nationwide wild food preparation contest and a listing of wild foods specialists available for programs and consultation.

The annual meeting of the National Wild Foods Association is held in conjunction with the Nature Wonder Weekend on the third weekend of September at North Bend State Park, Cairo, WV. Members are informed of other weekends held in different states. For more information contact Edeline Wood, President, National Wild Foods Association, 3404 Hemlock Avenue, Parkersburg, WV 26104.

### Local Coordinators

Beckley	Gary Worthington 118 Clark Avenue Fayetteville, WV 25840 574-0540
Charleston	George Hurley 920 Hughes Drive St. Albans, WV 25177 727-4218
Eastern Mountain	Carolyn Ruddle Box 13 Franklin, WV 26807 358-2878
Eastern Panhandle East	Robert S. Dean Rt. 2, Box 293 Martinsburg, WV 25401 274-1161
Eastern Panhandle West Huntington	Open Tom Igou 420 California St. Huntington, WV 25704 429-5409
Morgantown	LeJay Graffious P.O. Box 69 Bruceton Mills, WV 26525
Northern Panhandle	Don Nemanich 39 Duquensne Wheeling, WV 26003 242-3185
Parkersburg	William Armstrong 2100 Grand Central Avenue Vienna, WV 26105 295-4521
Princeton	James Phillips 809 Thorn Street Princeton, WV 24740 425-5776
Western Mountain	Craig W. Stihler P.O. Box 67 Elkins, WV 26241 636-1767



## Endangered Species Notes

• In December of 1985, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service listed the piping plover (*Charadrius melodus*) as endangered in the Great Lakes region (where only 17 breeding pairs remain), and threatened throughout the remainder of its range. The piping plover is a small, stocky shorebird with a short tail, short, stout beak and long pointed wings. It is distinguished by a single dark neck band, dark stripe across the forehead, pale back and yellow legs and feet. Piping plovers breed on the northern Great Plains, shorelines of the Great Lakes and along the Atlantic Coast. They winter on the Atlantic and Gulf Coasts. In recent years, disturbance and habitat loss have reduced the piping plover to only 2,200 breeding pairs in the U.S. and Canada. This bird only occurs in West Virginia as an accidental visitor.

• The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, in cooperation with The Nature Conservancy of Hawaii and the Hawaii Department of Land and Natural Resources, has completed the purchase of 8,300 acres of native forest land (consisting primarily of rain forests) on the island of Hawaii. This is the first phase of an effort to establish a 33,500 acre Hakalau Forest National Wildlife Refuge for the long term conservation of endangered Hawaiian forest birds. This refuge will also maintain habitat for many other plants and animals unique to Hawaii.

—Peter A. Stine, *Endangered Species Technical Bulletin*, Vol. XI, No. 1, p. 5

• The winters of 1984 and 1985 were very hard on the small remaining wild population of the endangered California condor (*Gymnogyps californianus*). By December of 1985, only 6 remained. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) decided to capture the remaining wild condors and place them with the 21 condors already in captivity until the reasons for their continuing decline are discovered. Biologists thus hope to promote condor reproduction without the risk of further deaths in the wild. On January 3, 1986, one of the two female condors and a member of the last wild breeding pair was captured.

It was found to be suffering from severe lead poisoning and died soon afterward. An autopsy revealed 8 shotgun pellets embedded in one of its wings. Although the lead poisoning was not caused from these pellets, they exemplify the dangers these magnificent birds encounter in the wild.

On January 9, the National Audubon Society won a restraining order in federal court prohibiting the USFWS from capturing the remaining 5 wild birds. Future issues of the "Nongame News" will update information on the condor situation.

## WV Raptor Rehabilitation Center

### Update

In the 1984 fall issue of the "Nongame News" our readers were introduced to the WV Raptor Rehabilitation Center (WVRRRC). Located in Morgantown, the center is a nonprofit volunteer organization dedicated to the care of injured, orphaned, and sick birds of prey with the goal of returning them to the wild. Another major objective of the organization is to educate people about the valuable role raptors play as predators in the environment.

In 1984, 57 injured birds were brought to the center. Screech owls, red-tailed and sharp-shinned hawks, great horned owls, and kestrels made up the majority of birds received, in order of abundance. Of the 57 birds, 30 died from their injuries or were euthanized because their injuries were too severe for treatment, 26 birds were released, and 1 was given to the French Creek Game Farm.

As of December 16, the Raptor Center had received 65 birds in 1985. Twenty-five percent of these were red-tailed hawks and another 20% were screech owls; great horned owls accounted for 14% of the birds received and red-shouldered hawks 8%. In all, 11 raptor species were brought to the Center. The leading causes of injuries were collisions and gunshot.

Ten birds are currently in various stages of rehabilitation. Thirty percent have already been released. This figure, as well as last year's, compares very

favorably with other raptor treatment centers across the country. The remaining 36 birds perished, largely due to delays in getting injured birds to the Center. Thus, the WVRRRC is in need of volunteers statewide willing to transport birds via a relay system. For more information on how you can help, write the WV Raptor Rehabilitation Center, P. O. Box 333, Morgantown, WV 26507 or call the Center's 24-hour line at 304-296-8358.

## Country Cooking

by Helen Hale

Having spent a lifetime living and working in rural West Virginia, Helen Hale is an authority on down-home cooking. *Country Cooking* contains her original recipes for fixing conventional meats and vegetables sprinkled with sensible methods for preparing wild plants and game.

Mrs. Hale is an active member in the National Wild Foods Association and her special dishes like venison pepper steak are one of the highlights of the Nature Wonder Weekend held each year at North Bend State Park in West Virginia.

Helen believes that wild food is both healthful and delicious and that there is really nothing "wild" about ramp cheese puffs, sassafras jelly, or rabbit sausage.

This paperback book is available through Allegheny Press for \$5.95. Include 70¢ for shipping one book, or \$1.25 for more than one. Send your remittance to Allegheny Press, Elgin, PA 16413 (PA residents add 6% sales tax).





# Of Cows And Cattails

by Kathleen Clark  
West Virginia University

The farm pond . . . There are over 21,000 of these man-made water holes nestled in the hills and dotting the valleys of West Virginia. An integral part of our farmscape since the 1940's, their main function is to provide water for livestock and fire protection. But are cattle the only animals taking advantage of this valuable resource?

As wildlife watchers know, wetlands — including ponds and marshes — are attractive to many kinds of animals for the water and special foods they provide. Insects attract many songbirds (including swallows, yellow warblers, and fly-catchers); small fish and frogs are foods of the shy green-backed heron and great blue heron; invertebrate creatures living within the mud entice spotted sandpipers to probe the shorelines. Only in these wet conditions will a chorus of frogs and spring peepers arise in the spring, and a pair of iridescent dragonflies hover in summer. Perhaps more often commanding attention are the ducks and geese that grace the open water — either for just a few days rest, or calling it “home” and nesting within the confines of the pond.



Do the wildlife that happen upon your pond leave disappointed, seeking “greener pastures” or greener ponds? Take a closer look at your pond from their furred or feathered view. As most farm ponds are constructed to hold water, they have deep, compact bottoms with steep sides and little or no vegetation. Often, the banks are covered only by a short carpet of grass that harbors few insects. “Water holes” like these don’t offer much for wildlife. However, with some easy modifications wildlife can be brought to your pond.

First, protect the bank by letting natural sedges, joe-pye weed, and other “seedy” plants grow up. Help things along with strategically placed decorative plantings such as alder, dogwood, honeysuckle and willow that will provide homes for song sparrows and warblers. Next, look beyond the pond. If there’s a large clump of trees or shrubs nearby, let nature connect it with the pond by encouraging a “travel lane” of weeds or shrubs to grow up. This will enable you to help the “shy” or more slowly-moving wildlife to reach your pond.

Move up to the edge. Is there any nice mud to probe? Any emergent greenery to wade around or stalks to perch on? Further out, is there a submerged world of leaves and stems, some reaching to the water’s surface for direct sunlight? Is there an old log for a turtle or water snake to bask on? These are signs of a real wildlife pond. If you think about it, the continuum of plants from dry land to underwater provides so much more than does short grass and water. Cattails, pondweeds, and water lilies are signs of a “good neighborhood” to turtles, frogs, salamanders, and shoreline birds.

“Extras” for pond wildlife can also be made available. Nest boxes along the edge for swallows, purple martin houses, and islands or nesting structures for waterfowl may allow you a closer view at a “wild” kind of family life.

The farm pond holds potential for a great variety of plant and animal life. With just a little manipulation of nature, a whole community of fascinating wild creatures can grow and live “down on the farm!”

## New River Gorge Rare Plant Study

In September of 1984 the WV Department of Natural Resources entered into an agreement with the United States National Park Service to conduct a rare plant study of the New River Gorge National River. Extensive field searches were conducted throughout the 1985 field season. Twenty previously reported rare plant sites were rediscovered and an additional 27 rare plant populations were documented. Of particular note were two plant species considered to be globally rare — Steel’s meadowrue (*Thalictrum steeleanum*) and mountain bittercress (*Cardamine clematitis*). Several species were reported for the first time for West Virginia, including two new sedges (*Carex woodii* and *Fimbristylis annua*). Significant sites have been identified to the Park Service and will be incorporated into development strategies regarding the National River. This study is due to be completed by the end of 1986.

## Roads vs. Wildlife

The proliferation of roads and highways is a major factor contributing to the loss of wildlife habitat. Between 1940 and 1970, the paved mileage of state, county, and municipal roads in the U. S. doubled to over 2,946,000 miles. Roads not only destroy the immediate habitat for wildlife, but some animals will often avoid favorable habitat bordering either side of the paved roadway for a quarter of a mile. Road kills may also be a significant factor in reducing some wildlife populations. An example is the Florida panther, whose existence is threatened by two highways that pass through its remaining habitat. Research is now being conducted in several states to determine how roads and wildlife may best coexist.

—Scope, State of Connecticut  
Volume VI, Issue 6



# Red-Winged Blackbird—Wetland Bird In A Mountain State

by Kevin M. Dodge  
West Virginia University

"CONK-LA—REEEE." The call evokes images of green, waving expanses of marshland rushes and reeds. Yet the call is originating from the edge of a gravel road winding through farmlands in the West Virginia hills. Puzzled, you venture closer towards a roadside ditch just wet enough to support a small patch of tall cattails. Riding a slender cattail blade swaying in the wind is an all black bird almost the size of a robin. Most noticeable are its prominently displayed bright red shoulder patches, edged with yellow. The bird hunches its body and calls again, slightly spreading its wings to better show off its scarlet epaulets. You are now face to face with a male red-winged blackbird, ardently proclaiming its ownership of the tiny cattail swale.

The red-winged blackbird is a familiar summertime inhabitant of wetlands throughout much of North America. West Virginia, a state noticeably lacking in marshes and swamps, still supports a considerable number of these birds. An important factor promoting the presence of the redwing in the state is the bird's ability to adapt to many upland habitats. Blackbirds can be found nesting in many sites away from water as long as grassy or grasslike vegetation of sufficient height is available. In the past century, as forests were removed and lands converted to pastures and cropland, the invading tall grasses and weeds provided suitable nesting sites for redwings. An abundant food supply of both animal and plant material afforded easy living, and blackbirds readily

populated many areas previously uninhabited by the bird.

Also aiding the spread of red-winged blackbirds in West Virginia has been the formation of numerous small wetlands, particularly along roadsides. Many times road construction will alter the natural drainage of an area, perhaps slowing the flow of a small creek, or pooling water at either end of a culvert placed beneath the road. The resulting wet spots are frequently colonized by wetland plant species, especially cattails. Wetland size makes little difference - even one-tenth acre cattail patches can support at least one blackbird pair. With all the roads snaking through the Mountain State, it's easy to see that small, man-made roadside wetlands have significantly aided redwing expansion into otherwise unsuitable terrain.

Where did red-winged blackbirds originally breed in West Virginia? Most of the state's presettlement wetlands probably supported redwing populations. These included streamside marshes and alder thickets, wet meadows or "glades," beaver ponds, and high mountain bogs. But the prime habitat in West Virginia is, and probably always has been, the cattail marsh. Dr. George Hall, in his *West Virginia Birds*, writes of a shallow pond and cattail marsh in Mason County occupied by 22 male redwings per acre. Add to that figure at least as many females (some males have more than one mate), and you have a population that would be the envy of any coastal marsh.

There are both positive and negative sides to the blackbird population

expansion in West Virginia. After nesting, redwings join in flocks with other blackbird species and starlings. These flocks may be huge, numbering in the thousands of birds. At this time, blackbirds may pose a threat to maturing grain crops, particularly corn. A study in nearby Ohio found that almost one percent of the state's corn crop was destroyed each year by blackbirds of various species. This may be less of a problem in the Mountain State, where cornfields are not so abundant. Blackbirds make up for this loss by benefitting man in several ways. A large component of the redwings summer diet consists of insects, including agricultural pest species gleaned from alfalfa and other crops. Winter and early spring flocks forage on harvested, bare fields, consuming both insects and the seeds of many noxious weed species.

Although the red-winged blackbird may possess a few less than desirable traits, there is little doubt that the bird adds color and song to the West Virginia countryside. Next time you're out fishing along an alder lined stream, traipsing through a damp, grassy pasture, or motoring down the highways, keep your eye open for the redwing, a wetland bird that has benefitted from man's activities.

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*The Department of Natural Resources offers its programs to people of all ages regardless of race, color, sex, religion, or national origin and is an equal opportunity employer.*





Red-Winged Blackbird  
*Agelaius phoeniceus*



## Habitat Hint

### A Christmas Tree For The Birds

by Craig Tufts

Thinking "Christmas tree" in April may seem unseasonable, but an evergreen planted now (or as early as the ground thaws) will be thriving next December, and it will probably be decorated with birds. You won't have to add an ornament or a light.

Planting evergreens is one of the best things you can do for your yard — and for wildlife. The dense foliage does triple duty: it beautifies; strategically placed, it shields your home from harsh winds; and it also provides protection for wildlife — especially for songbirds. Evergreens in your yard are as direct an invitation to the birds as you can extend.

Songbirds revel in evergreen growth. They use it as a buffer against the wind and as shelter from the snow. You yourself can test the wind-protection of the foliage. Some blustery day (and there are no doubt a few such days left this month), find a pine, spruce, fir, hemlock, holly, or cedar tree. Stand on the cold, windward side a few minutes; then go around to the downwind side. There's quite a difference. You'll find the protected side remarkably comfortable—as do the birds.

The birds also find protection from hawks, cats, and other predators among evergreen boughs. Sometimes they nest in the trees, too. Some evergreens provide food for the birds, for instance, the Eastern redcedar (*Juniperus virginiana*), the Rocky Mountain juniper (*J. scopulorum*), American, Nellie Stevens and Foster hollies (*Ilex* species and hybrids), and hemlocks (*Tsuga* species).

Some deciduous trees do well when planted in the fall, but spring is the best time of year to plant evergreens. They need the summer months to establish their roots before the harsh winter weather hits them.

In planning your evergreen plantings, here are a few things to consider:

- Choose a tree well suited to your climate. Consult your local garden center to determine what plants are hardy in your area.

- Choose a tree that can be sheared. Shearing helps to create even greater foliage density than would naturally occur. It also allows you to shape the tree to your liking.
- Allow space for the tree to grow freely. Remember that even a sheared tree may grow to be as much as 15 feet in diameter.
- If feasible, plant your tree north or northwest of your house, to block winter winds and possibly save on energy costs.
- For optimum enjoyment, plant the tree where your view of it from the house is unobstructed. Then keep your binoculars by the window to feast your eyes on the birds that are sure to be visiting your "Christmas tree" all year round.

—The Backyard Naturalist

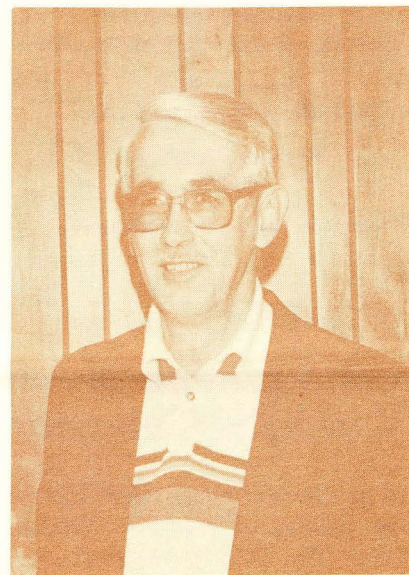
## Westvaco Donates Nature Preserve

The Westvaco Corporation has donated to The Nature Conservancy (TNC) one of the most ecologically significant shale barren plant communities known to occur anywhere in the world. The 153 acre tract, known as the Slaty Mountain Shale Barren, is located in Monroe County near the community of Sweet Springs, West Virginia. The donation represents the first corporate contribution in WV of a tract of land which will be established and perpetually managed as one of TNC's formal nature preserves.

Shale barrens are ecosystems found only in eastern West Virginia, western Virginia, and a small part of Maryland and Pennsylvania. They are found on steep shale slopes characterized by thin, dry soils. Of the 17 plant species which grow only on the harsh shale barrens, 11 are known to occur at Slaty Mountain. Among these are Kate's Mountain clover, shale barren onion, yellow buckwheat, and shale barren evening primrose.

The outright acquisition of a shale barren habitat has been considered a high priority of the Conservancy's WV

Chapter for a number of years. It was for this reason that a shale barren was included as one of the targets for the Chapter's WV Natural Areas Campaign — a \$200,000 two-year effort to simultaneously protect 8 sites around the state.



## Advisory Council Member

Mr. Ivan M. Taylor has dedicated his life to educating West Virginia students in the field of environmental science. Born in Virginia, he attended Concord College in Athens, West Virginia and the University of Virginia where he earned a Master's degree in Science Education. Currently, Mr. Taylor is a science teacher at Princeton High School in the Mercer County School system. He has served as the state science coordinator for the WV Department of Education, and president of the WV Conservation Education Council for several years. In addition, he has maintained an active membership with the council since 1967. Mr. Taylor feels that while outdoor education is often neglected, it is an extremely important subject to be taught to today's youth.

Ivan's educational experience and interests make him a very important addition to the Council, as the WV Nongame Wildlife Program is actively involved in many projects designed to educate the public about all aspects of our state's wildlife resources.



## WEST VIRGINIA NONGAME NEWS

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*Ronald R. Potesta  
Director, Department of Natural Resources*

*Robert L. Miles  
Chief, Wildlife Resources Division*

*Kathleen Carothers  
Editor*

*Ideas for articles are welcomed*

## Second Edition of WV Wildlife Calendar

Orders are now being taken for the second edition of the WV Wildlife Calendar. The 14 x 22 inch calendar features paintings by WV artists with a description of each animal. In addition, the calendar includes information on wild flowers, bird migration, hunting and fishing, plus a wealth of additional wildlife facts concerning both game and nongame animals. The calendar runs from September 1986 through August 1987 and sells for \$5.25 each plus 50¢ shipping. However, if you use the special form from the 1985-1986 calendar, total cost will only be \$5.00. Proceeds will help support the Nongame Wildlife Program.

### WEST VIRGINIA NONGAME NEWS

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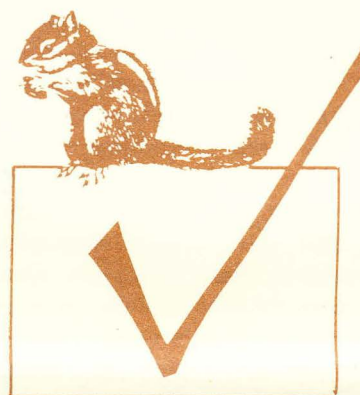
MAIL TO:  
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West Virginia Dept. of Natural Resources  
P. O. Box 67  
Elkins, WV 26241

## New Nongame T-Shirts

This spring the Nongame Program is offering a new T-shirt design featuring the Program's logo — the chipmunk, in addition to the screech owls. Both styles are available in adult sizes S, M, L and XL and children's 2-4, 6-8, 10-12 and 14-16. Colors and styles are variable according to size. Adult T-shirts are \$6.25 and children's \$5.00 postpaid. Simply send a check or money order made out to the WV Department of Natural Resources, along with size and color choice (substitutions may be necessary), to T-shirt, WV Dept. of Natural Resources, Nongame Unit, P. O. Box 67, Elkins, WV 26241.

Remember to DO SOMETHING WILD! and support the West Virginia Nongame Wildlife Program.

"Check-off" Line 8 on your WV Income Tax Form.



SPRING 1986

Vol. 4 No. 2

## WV NONGAME NEWS

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